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FROM

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DOCNO

SERIAL: (U)

/******* THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *******/

BODY

COUNTRY: (U) BURMA (BM); THAILAND (TH).

SUBJ: THE FEBRUARY 1997 BURMESE ARMY OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE KAREN NATIONAL UNION 6TH BRIGADE (U)

WARNING: (U) THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY PAGE 2

EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE, REPORT CLASSIFIED

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DOI: (U) 970400.

REQS: (U)

SUPPOSED WIDESPREAD HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES PERPETRATED BY BURMESE ARMY SOLDIERS DURING THEIR FEBRUARY 1997 GROUND OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE KAREN NATIONAL UNION (KNU) ETHNIC INSurgent GROUP.
2. (U) BELOW IS AN "EXECUTIVE SUMMARY" OF THIS DOCUMENT:

"THE 1997 STATE LAW AND ORDER RESTORATION COUNCIL (SLORC) OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE KNU BEGAN ON FEBRUARY 10TH. THE SLORC MOBILIZED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TROOPS FOR THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE KNU WITH SOLDIERS PRIMARILY FROM THE LIGHT INFANTRY DIVISIONS 22 AND 44 ATTACKING THE SIXTH BRIGADE AREA. THIS REPORT ADDRESSES HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED IN THE SIXTH BRIGADE AREA, OR DUPAYA DISTRICT, IN KAREN STATE. THE KNU HAS DIVIDED THEIR TERRITORY INTO SEVERAL BRIGADIES, AND SIXTH BRIGADE COVERS A STRIP OF TERRITORY ALONG THE THAI-BURMA BORDER STRETCHING FROM MYAWADDY IN THE NORTH TO THREE PAGODAS PASS IN THE SOUTH. THE REPORT CONSISTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH REFUGEES WHO CAME INTO CONTACT WITH SLORC TROOPS IN THE KNU'S SIXTH BRIGADE AREA. INTERVIEWS WITH MUSLIMS REFUGEES CONFIRM THAT THE SLORC HAS BEEN CARRYING OUT AN ANTI-MUSLIM CAMPAIGN IN THE DUPAYA AREA."

3. (U) "ANTI-MUSLIM CAMPAIGN:
IN BURMA TODAY THERE ARE ESTIMATED TO BE APPROXIMATELY SEVEN MILLION MUSLIMS. LARGE NUMBERS OF INDIANS OF BOTH MUSLIM AND HINDU FAITHS MIGRATED TO BURMA DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD. THE MUSLIM POPULATION IN KAREN STATE NUMBERS IN THE THOUSANDS, WITH MUSLIMS ENGAGING IN A RANGE OF PROFESSIONS FROM FARMING TO SHOP-KEEPING. THERE ARE TWO MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS WHICH WERE ESTABLISHED IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES AND HAVE WORKED WITH THE KNU. THE ALL BURMA MUSLIM UNION (ABMU) MAINTAINS ITS OWN BATTALION OF TROOPS AND HAS BEEN FIGHTING TOGETHER WITH THE KAREN

4. (U) "SLORC TROOPS DESTROYED SEVEN VILLAGE MOSQUES AND THE SPECIAL COFFIN USED IN EACH MOSQUE FOR CARRYING THE DEAD. IN MOST CASES THE KORAN WAS ALSO EITHER BURNED OR SHREDDED. SLORC SOLDIERS MADE IT KNOWN THAT THEY WERE TARGETING MUSLIMS AND HAVE THREATENED TO KILL MUSLIMS THAT THEY SEE. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN CONFIRMED REPORTS OF SLORC TROOPS KILLING MUSLIMS. MUSLIMS FROM KAREN STATE FACE A PRECARIOUS FUTURE. THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THEY CANNOT BECOME CITIZENS OF BURMA UNLESS THEY PROFESS BUDDHISM AS THEIR RELIGION."

5. (U) SUMMARY OF SELECTED INTERVIEWS IS AS FOLLOWS:

- (U) A. "MALE, KAREN-MUSLIM: I WAS GETTING WATER IN FRONT OF THE MOSQUE WHEN SOME SOLDIERS BROUGHT OUT THE KORAN AND I SAW THEM RIPPING IT UP. THE SOLDIERS SAID: "DON'T WATCH! JUST GET YOU WATER", POINTING THEIR GUNS AT ME. I WANTED TO CRY BUT COULDN'T. THEY THREW THE PIECES OF KORAN ON THE STREET. WHEN THE MUSLIM WOMEN ON THE STREET SAW THIS, THEY CRIED AND FELT SUCH PAIN. THE SLORC SOLDIERS SAID, "DON'T CRY! THIS IS NOT A MUSLIM COUNTRY! THIS IS A BUDDHIST COUNTRY! GO AWAY!" AN OFFICER FROM THE 202 TACTICAL OPERATION COMMAND (TOC), 22ND LID TOLD ME: "MUSLIMS CANNOT STAY. IF YOU ARE MUSLIM YOU MUST LEAVE." ANOTHER SAID: 'MUSLIM CANNOT STAY HERE, YOU MUST CONVERT TO BUDDHISM AND PUT AN ALTAR IN YOUR HOUSE.'" THIS INDIVIDUAL WENT ON TO TALK OF CASES OF BEATINGS, THEFT, EXTORTION, FORCED LABOR, KIDNAPPING, AND MUSLIMS BEING FORCED TO EAT PORK."

- (U) B. MALE, KAREN-CHRISTIAN: "SOLDIERS APPEAR TO
HAVE BEEN GIVEN CARTE BLANCHE TO TAKE OR DESTROY ANYTHING IN SIGHT. THE SLORC TROOPS TOOK ELEVEN VILLAGERS, LATER THREE WERE RELEASED AND SENT BACK TO THE VILLAGE WITH SLORC SOLDIERS. WHEN THEY ARRIVED, THE SOLDIERS TOLD THOSE THREE TO CALL EVERYONE HIDING AROUND THE VILLAGE AND SAID THEY MUST COME BACK BY 2 P.M. THEN THE SLORC SOLDIERS SAID, 'TOMORROW THE VILLAGERS MUST PORTER RICE TO MAW LA AYE. IF THEY DON'T ARRIVE THERE BY TOMORROW EVENING, THE SOLDIERS WILL KILL THOSE EIGHT VILLAGERS UP THERE.'

NE MANS THE
VILLAGE GATE AND THE OTHER ONE HAD BEEN ILLEGALLY SELLING
LOTTERY TICKETS. THE KNU HAD PUNISHED HIM BY MAKING HIM
ACCOMPANY THE TROOPS AND HELP THEM WITH DAILY CHORES. I
FEEL REALLY SAD ABOUT WHAT THEY (SLORC) ARE DOING RIGHT
NOW BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE GETTING HURT, AND LOSING ALL OF
THEIR POSSESSIONS. I THINK THAT THERE WILL BE A GREAT
PROBLEM WITH THE RICE SUPPLY BECAUSE THE VILLAGERS THERE
HAVE TO BUY BACK ALL THEIR RICE FROM THE SLORC. EVEN
THOUGH THE RICE ORIGINALLY BELONGED TO THE VILLAGERS,
THEY TOOK IT AND SOLD IT BACK TO THEM ANYWAY. BUT
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO HELP THE SITUATION"
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- (U) D. "MALE, KAREN, CHRISTIAN: THE CHRISTIAN
MINISTER WAS ARRESTED BY THE SLORC, AND THE SLORC
SOLDIERS SAID 'IF THIS MINISTER TRIES TO ESCAPE, WE WILL
KILL ALL THE VILLAGERS.' ANYONE WHO HAD A BULLOCK CART
HAD TO USE IT TO TRANSPORT GOOD FOR THE SLORC. A PERSON
FROM KAMAR KLER VILLAGE WENT TO PAH GLAW KHEE VILLAGE AND
SAID THAT THE SITUATION THERE IS WORSE THAN IN OUR
VILLAGE. ONE MUSLIM FAMILY WAS HIDING IN THE WOODS AND
THE BABY CRIED. THE SLORC SOLDIERS FOUND THEM AND BROKE
EVERYTHING IN THE WOMAN'S BASKET AND TOOK THE BABY AND
RIPPED IT IN HALF WITH THEIR BARE HANDS. ANOTHER GIRL
FROM THAT VILLAGE WAS FOUND DEAD WITH HER CLOTHES CUT
OFF. I KNEW ((JAW TU THAW)) FROM KROH DOH VILLAGE. HE
WAS A RETIRED KNLA SOLDIER. HE TOLD THE SLORC SOLDIERS
THAT HE WAS RETIRED, BUT THEY KILLED HIM ANYWAY. THEY
KILLED HIM IN FEBRUARY, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER THE EXACT
DATE. MY UNCLE IS THE HEADMAN OF KUI KLUH VILLAGE, VERY
NEAR THE THAI BORDER. THE SLORC CAME AND ACTED VERY
NICELY. THEY PAID 1000 KYAT FOR A PIG THERE. IN OTHER
PLACES THEY JUST STEAL THE PIG. THOSE WHO LIVED NEAR THE
BORDER WERE LUCKY, BECAUSE THEY COULD ESCAPE. THOSE
FARThER IN ARE MUCH WORSE OFF. NEAR THE BORDER, THE
SLORC SOLDIERS BEHAVE ALL RIGHT, BUT THOSE INSIDE ARE
TERRIBLE. THEY DON'T WANT THE THAIS TO KNOW THEY ARE
BAD. THE SLORC SOLDIERS AT THE BORDER ACT VERY NICE, BUT
YOU HAVE TO GO INSIDE TO THE VILLAGES AWAY FROM THE
BORDER TO KNOW HOW TERRIBLE THEY ARE."
6. (U) "SOLDIERS OUT OF CONTROL: THE SLORC SOLDIERS LOOT AND PILLAGE PARTLY BECAUSE THE SLORC PAYS ITS SOLDIERS SUCH LOW SALARIES. ORDINARY SOLDIERS RECEIVE ONLY 700 KYAT (US $4.25) A MONTH WHICH DOES NOT COVER EVEN THEIR MOST BASIC NEEDS. MOREOVER, OFTEN THIS AMOUNT IS TAXED BY THE HIGHER RANKS. IF THE SLORC CANNOT REWARD THEIR SOLDIERS WITH WAR BOOTY, THEY FEAR THAT THE RANK AND FILE WILL TURN AGAINST THEM. MOST SOLDIERS BECOME SOLDIERS BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF OTHER AVAILABLE JOBS. THE OFFICERS ALLOW THE SOLDIERS TO TAKE OUT THEIR ANGER AND FRUSTRATIONS ON THE HELPLESS VILLAGERS RATHER THAN HAVE THEM CHALLENGE MILITARY RULE. THERE APPEARS TO BE NO CODE OF CONDUCT TO WHICH SOLDIERS MUST ADHERE. SOLDIERS ARE RARELY PUNISHED FOR ABUSES AGAINST VILLAGERS AND IN SOME CASES ARE ENCOURAGED BY THEIR OFFICERS TO STEAL, RAPE, AND MURDER. THE LAWLESSNESS OF THE SLORC SOLDIERS IS WHAT SCARES THE REFUGEES MOST AND WAS THE PRIMARY REASON WHY REFUGEES DID NOT DARE TO GO BACK TO THEIR VILLAGES."

- END SUMMARY

(b)(1),(b)(1):10 USC 424.1, 14 (c)
AND PORTERING WILL CONTINUE. SECONDLY, BECAUSE KNU FORCES HAVE CHOSEN TO CONDUCT GUERRILLA WARFARE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE BURMESE ARMY (BA), THE BA WILL CONTINUE TO RESPOND IN KIND WITH BRUTAL AND SWIFT RETALIATION AGAINST VILLAGES AND VILLAGERS SUSPECTED TO BE SYMPATHETIC TO KNU FORCES. MANY VILLAGERS MAY FIND THEMSELVES CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE, LIABLE TO BE PUNISHED WITH PORTERING OR FORCED EXPROPRIATIONS OF PROPERTY FROM FORCES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CONFLICT.